



Fast Facts

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES

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LICENSING AND CERTIFICATION

The Licensing and Certification (L&C) program works to ensure quality of care for California's residents and patients of health care facilities with a two-sided equation:

1. Uniform enforcement of state licensing and federal certification requirements and standards.
2. Promotion of health care provider-initiated compliance and quality of care improvement activities.

L&C Enforcement Responsibilities

The majority of L&C's resources and efforts are dedicated to the complicated task of enforcing state and federal regulations and statutes governing the licensure and certification of California's care facilities. In general, these regulations prescribe standards of adequacy, safety, and sanitation of the physical plant; set staffing and service requirements based upon the type of facility and the needs of the persons served; and proscribe the rights of patients and/or residents to quality of care and dignity in treatment.

- **Surveys and complaint investigations.** L&C is responsible for conducting regular inspections of over 6,500 health care facilities to ensure their compliance with federal and state licensing and certification requirements. L&C also accepts and investigates complaints from consumers, consumer representatives, ombudsmen, the media, or anonymous sources against health facilities.
- **Imposing sanctions.** L&C has federal and state authority to impose enforcement remedies or sanctions when a facility is out of compliance. The effect may range from the requirement for a facility to prepare a plan of correction, to a monetary penalty, to de-certification, or withdrawal of licensure.
- **Professional certification.** L&C also certifies nurse assistants, home health aides, and hemodialysis technicians to provide services in California. Each candidate for certification is subjected to a credential and background check that includes investigation of any criminal record.

KEY TERMS

Licensing - Most types of health care facilities may not operate without a valid California license. The laws and requirements governing each facility type's licensure are primarily state laws and/or requirements.

Certification - To receive Medicare or Medicaid reimbursement for patient care, a health facility must also be certified. The laws and requirements regarding certification are primarily federal laws and/or requirements.

Initiatives to Encourage Quality of Care

While the largest portion of L&C staff and other resources are necessarily dedicated to the program's responsibility to enforce minimum standards of care, L&C is also committed to promoting a higher quality of care. Some of L&C's initiatives to encourage quality of care include:

- A "Best Practices" awards program for exemplary practices in long-term care.
- The Resident Rights Education Project to educate consumers and health care providers regarding the rights of long-term care residents.
- Multiple advisory bodies of health care providers and consumer advocates to discuss issues of concern, answer questions, and share information.
- Health care provider consultation and training regarding meeting federal and state requirements and laws.
- The study of successful emerging models of care and how to support them in law and policy revisions to ensure the greatest opportunity for their success in California.

Through its initiatives to encourage high quality care and commitment to rigorous, uniform enforcement, L&C balances the equation stated in the DHS mission statement: "To Protect and Improve the Health of all Californians."